

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605
Sacramento, CA. 95825
Phone: 916-414-6600
Fax: 916-414-6713
<http://www.fws.gov/sacramento/>

News Release



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Contacts:

Al Donner, 916/414-6566

For specific areas, please contact:

Jane Hendron (Southern California Coast), 760/431-9440

Lois Grunwald (Central California Coast), 805/644-1766 ext 332

Randy Brown (Northern California Coast), 707/822-7201

Phil Carroll (Oregon), 503/231-6179

Taylor Pittman (Washington), 360/753-4375

Recovery Plan for Pacific Coast Population of the Western Snowy Plover To Rely on Strong Volunteer Effort *Plan Covers Entire Pacific Coast of California, Oregon and Washington*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has completed a cooperative plan to recover the Pacific Coast population of the Western Snowy plover, a tiny shore bird, to a sustainable level where it can be removed from the federally protected category.

“We strongly believe that a collaborative stewardship approach, involving government agencies and the private sector is critical to achieving the ultimate goal of recovery,” the plan emphasizes. The plan covers the entire Pacific Coast of California, Oregon and Washington. Notice of the plan’s availability was published today in the Federal Register.

In contrast to recovery strategies designed for species that are remote from concentrations of people, the plover plan will rely heavily on six comprehensive recovery working groups. The different approach for the plover is due largely to the heavy human presence on, and dynamic nature of, beach areas where plovers live.

“These groups can provide large networks of volunteers who can be mobilized to assist public resource agencies,” the plan explains. Working groups associated with each of the recovery units include a wide range of interests with land managers and environmental interests, and diverse groups of beach users from equestrians to Boy Scouts.

Non-government organizations, such as PRBO Conservation Science (formerly Point Reyes Bird Observatory) and Audubon Society, conduct research, provide technical guidance, and inform the public in ways they can help manage and conserve the plover.

The recovery plan seeks cooperative management and monitoring, mixed with education and public participation, to restore the plover to sustainable numbers.

The plover is a tiny beach bird, weighing less than two ounces. Plovers spend their lives at the popular line where surf and sand meet. They are at their most vulnerable when nesting; the birds lay their eggs in slight depressions in the sandy areas of beaches, preferring areas where there are few barriers down to the water.

Because West Coast beaches are very popular and attract many visitors, plover nests are vulnerable to disruption and destruction throughout the month-long incubation period. Chicks remain vulnerable for another month after hatching, until they can fly. Pacific Coast snowy plovers breed and nest during highest period of beach use, March through September.

The recovery target established in the plan is to maintain an average of 3,000 breeding adults for 10 years distributed through the six recovery units, with at least one fledged chick per adult male for the last five years.

Western Snowy Plover Recovery Units	Goal: Number of Breeding Adults
1. Washington & Oregon	250
2. CA—Del Norte--Mendocino counties	150
3. CA – San Francisco Bay	500
4. CA – Coast: Sonoma--Monterey counties	400
5. CA – San Luis Obispo--Ventura counties	1,200
6. CA – Los Angeles--San Diego counties	500

The plover was listed as “threatened” in 1993. Under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) the listing provides broad protection for the species without regard to habitat. Under the ESA, no one may harm or injure a species in any way. Last year the Service designated 32 units of critical habitat along the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington for the Pacific coast population of the plover, totaling 12,145 acres, although the Service asserts that a formal Critical Habitat designation provides little additional protection for a species.

The plover has been the focus of several legal challenges from beach users; at the same time many government agencies and volunteers are working to help the species. The recovery plan seeks to draw all interests together in a coordinated effort to assure the long-term survival of the species. In 2006 the Service completed a five-year review of the plover in response to two petitions to delist it. The Service concluded that, while the plover is making progress in some areas, it is not sufficiently recovered to remove its protections under the ESA.

A link to a copy of the final recovery plan and other information is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/arcata/es/birds/WSP/plover.html>, or by contacting the Arcata Fish and Wildlife Office by telephone at 707-822-7201.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal

Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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