



News Release



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Habitat Conservation Plan for Western Snowy Plover and Related Environmental Impact Statement Released for Comment *Plan Covers Recreation and Management on 32 Miles of Oregon's 230 Miles of Beach*

Beach visitors and the threatened western snowy plover will share Oregon's ocean shore under a habitat conservation plan submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. The plan is required for Oregon to receive a permit that acknowledges there may be times when recreation accidentally disturbs or harms plovers. The draft plan and permit application, and an Environmental Impact Statement analyzing their effects were released today for public comment. All comments must be received by the Fish and Wildlife Service by close of business on January 4, 2008.

The plan details the management proposed at the six beach sites totaling 32 miles of ocean shore where plovers already nest, and where some limitations on recreation have been in effect for years. Proposed changes to recreation in places where plovers already nest include where and when vehicles may be driven on beaches, where, when and how dogs and kites are allowed and restriction of some activities to the wet-sand area of the beach. The plan also details future management and recreation changes at another 11 sites, totaling 16 additional miles of ocean shore, if plovers occupy them in the future. Oregon's coast is 365 miles long, and includes 230 miles of sandy beach.

"With careful planning, we know people will continue to enjoy the ocean shore while we help the plover recover," said Tim Wood, Director, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. "The new draft was built after many hours of public meetings, and the plan strikes a good balance between aid for the bird and recreation."

"Habitat conservation planning is a key piece of our collaborative stewardship approach to achieving our goal of recovering the species," said Ren Lohofener, director of the Pacific Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We appreciate the thoroughness of Oregon's planning, outreach and environmental assessment work in support of plover conservation and Oregon's beach lovers."

The State of Oregon intends to manage recreation and natural resources in designated spots on the ocean shore to help the plover recover. As a result, the plover may be disturbed or accidentally harmed in the managed spot and other areas of the coast. A permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would acknowledge the possibility of accidental harm caused by Oregon managing the ocean shore for legal recreation. To receive the permit, Oregon will follow a habitat conservation plan, or HCP, to help a threatened species recover in well-defined areas. The

plan ensures the party is minimizing the effects to the species and making up for any harm that's done. Once an HCP is final, the Fish and Wildlife Service issues the permit, called an Incidental Take Permit.

In those areas where plovers already nest on the south coast, there will be limits on dogs, driving, kite-flying, non-motorized vehicle use and other activities on the dry sand. In select places where there are no plovers, but where the habitat will be improved to try and attract them, dogs must be leashed and beach driving will be off-limits for part of the year.

The Fish and Wildlife Service will evaluate the application for the permit, all associated documents, and all comments received to determine whether the application meets the requirements of the Endangered Species Act, and to prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The plover is a tiny beach bird, weighing less than two ounces, which has been listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act since 1993. Plovers spend their lives at the 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 Oregon's beaches 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.

Plovers are also very vulnerable to predation by a number of different kinds of birds and small mammals, and have had their available habitat reduced by the spread of European beach grass on Oregon's coast.

You may view or download the draft Plan, draft IA, and DEIS on the internet at either of these links:

egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/PLANS/osmp_hcp.shtml

<http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/Species/>

The documents can also be reviewed by appointment at the Fish and Wildlife Service Newport Field Office, 2127 SE OSU Drive, Newport, OR, 97365-5258 during normal business hours. They also are available at the public libraries in Astoria, Bandon, Brookings, Coos Bay, Florence, Gold Beach, Manzanita, Newport, Port Orford, Reedsport, Seaside, Tillamook, and Warrenton.

All written comments on the Habitat Conservation Plan, Incidental Take Permit application, and Environmental Impact Statement must be sent to Laura Todd, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Newport Field Office, 2127 SE OSU Drive, Newport, OR, 97365-5258; facsimile (541) 867-4551. Comments also may be submitted by e-mail to FW1ORDHCP@fws.gov. In the subject line of the e-mail include the identifier OPRD HCP DEIS.

Chronology of previous federal actions regarding the coastal population of the Western snowy plover:

- The Pacific Coast population of the western snowy plover was listed as "threatened" on March 5, 1993, due to interrelated threats including loss of habitat, predators and human disturbance.
- On December 7, 1999, Critical habitat was designated. However, on July 2, 2003 the rule was remanded by the United States District Court for the District of Oregon for flaws in the rule's economic analysis.
- On August 14, 2001 the Service released a draft Recovery Plan for the plover.
- On Sept. 29, 2005, the Service completed its second critical habitat rule, designating 12,145 acres (in 24 units within California, 5 within Oregon, and 3 within Washington).
- On April 21, 2006, the Service resolved two petitions to delist the species, determining that delisting was not warranted. At the same time, the Service proposed an ESA Section 4(d) rule, which allows the "take" of protected species in some situations where a party is working to help the species.

- On June 8, 2006, the Service completed an ESA-required “5-year review” of the plover, concluding that it should remain listed as “threatened.”
- On September 24, 2007, the Service released the final Recovery Plan for the Coast population of the Western snowy plover.

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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