

News Release



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Western Snowy Plover Habitat Conservation Plan Documents Available for Public Review

Public comments accepted until October 25, 2010

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is making available for public review documents related to a proposed Habitat Conservation Plan for the threatened western snowy plover in the State of Oregon.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, which has management responsibility for Oregon coastal shores where snowy plovers breed and nest, has worked with the Fish and Wildlife Service for several years to develop the statewide plan to address recreation and management impacts to snowy plovers. The small, sandy beach-loving birds have been protected under the Endangered Species Act since 1993.

“The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has taken great care in laying out a thorough and balanced Habitat Conservation Plan for western snowy plovers, coastal communities, and beach visitors to share the shore,” said Paul Henson, State Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office.

A Habitat Conservation Plan is required for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to receive an “incidental take” permit for occasions when recreation inadvertently disturbs or harms plovers. When final, the Habitat Conservation Plan will form the basis of the state agency’s permit application. The Fish and Wildlife Service approves such permits when the applicant develops measures to monitor, minimize, and mitigate for incidental take and support the species’ overall recovery.

The state has a longstanding and successful management program supporting plover recovery that involves habitat enhancement, predator control, invasive species eradication, and shifting recreation away from nesting areas. The Habitat Conservation Plan proposes concentrating attention toward 16 sites across the species’ range in Oregon—some that provide high quality habitat and restrict activities that affect plovers, and others where carefully managed public use would be allowed. Each site will have a management plan that provides more detail on conservation and recreation activities.

- Out of the 16 sites, six are currently occupied by nesting plovers. In the plover occupied areas, no motorized vehicles, dogs, or kite-flying from the beach would be allowed (vehicles are already prohibited). Nesting areas would continue to be roped and fenced.
- For the 10 unoccupied sites, three would be specially managed over the next five years to attract plovers. Seven others have the potential to appeal to plovers and may eventually be managed to expand their habitat. In unoccupied areas, no public use restrictions are immediately proposed.

The main document published in today's *Federal Register* is the Fish and Wildlife Service's final Environmental Impact Statement analyzing the effects of the Habitat Conservation Plan and permit on the environment, people, and area economies. The final EIS addresses public comments provided after the draft EIS was published in November 2007.

Other documents available for public review and comment include the permit application, the Habitat Conservation Plan, and an "Implementing Agreement" explaining the ways it would be carried out.

The *Federal Register* notice includes available locations and other means of reviewing the documents. It can be viewed at www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/. The Fish and Wildlife Service will accept public comments through October 25, 2010.

Oregon's coast is 365 miles long and includes about 230 miles of sandy beach. There are currently eight plover breeding and wintering areas out of a documented 29 historic areas on the south-central Oregon Coast. When the Pacific Coast population of the western snowy plover was listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened in 1993, there were about 35 plovers in Oregon. Now, there are about 175. The species' recovery plan established the goal of 100 breeding pairs in Oregon. The overall recovery goal is 3,000 breeding adults per year for 10 years in Washington, Oregon, and California.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.