



News Release

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**DEM ANNOUNCES TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF EAST BEACH/NINIGRET
CONSERVATION AREA SAND TRAIL BEGINNING AT 9 AM TUESDAY JUNE 2,
2015 IN ORDER TO PROTECT PIPING PLOVER NESTING AREAS**

PROVIDENCE - The Department of Environmental Management announces that in order to provide protection for endangered piping plovers, public access to the East Beach/Ninigret Conservation Area Sand Trail will be restricted to pedestrian traffic only beginning at 9 AM. Tuesday June 2, 2015 until a tentative date of June 25, 2015. The piping plover is a small shorebird that is listed as threatened on both Federal and State endangered species lists.

Hurricane Sandy changed the face of the Rhode Island coastline and beaches for the public as well as for piping plovers. On East Beach there are many over-wash areas that provide access for young birds, and piping plover chicks have been feeding and taking refuge along the sand trail. US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff and volunteers monitor the plover nests and broods on a daily basis. The sand trail will be reopened and the protective roping will be removed once the young piping plover chicks are able to fly. Throughout this summer and into the fall DEM, USFWS and the Coastal Resources Management Council will work together to plan restoration of these dunes in order to restore vegetation between the beach and the sand trail. Restoration of the dunes is expected to reduce the likelihood of plovers utilizing the sand trail.

“With the changes in beach habitat and populations, we especially need the help of beachgoers to protect piping plovers and respect sand trail closures,” said DEM Director Janet Coit. “We are confident that the ongoing monitoring will enable us to reopen the sand trail to vehicles as soon as possible.”

The temporary closure will prohibit all vehicles from accessing areas beyond the main parking area. However, the resident pedestrian beach and parking lot will remain open to permitted vehicles. DEM and USFWS staff reviewed options in order to avoid closing the area to vehicular traffic, but had no alternative but to close the sand trail in order to avoid further conflicts between wildlife and off-road vehicles.

Sections of the East Beach off-road vehicle corridor may be reopened on or about August 1, if not sooner. The entire East Beach is monitored on a daily basis and will be reopened, either in part or in whole, to recreational uses and off road “permitted” vehicular traffic as soon as

possible. As partial beach access is granted, restrictions may be in place that impact off-road vehicle limits.

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