Memo

To:

Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission

Open Space Advisory Committee

From: Mayor Julie Lancelle

Date: July 15, 2009

Re: Shore Bird Protection Plan for Linda Mar Beach

Over the past year there have been numerous discussions and meetings regarding potential measures to provide protection for the Shore Birds that congregate on Linda Mar Beach. Measures proposed so far have included increased regulation of dogs on the beach, signage that helps to educate the public and fencing of potential habitat areas.

In order to move this process along and develop consensus on the issue I'm putting together a subcommittee of the PB&R Commission and the Open Space Advisory Committee that will work to develop a recommended plan that is acceptable to both groups. Each body should designate two members who are interested in serving on the subcommittee.

We have asked a representative POOCH to serve on this subcommittee to provide a perspective from the POOCH community. Michael Perez, PB&R Director will provide staff assistance to the committee and facilitate coordination with other affected City Departments such as Planning, Police and Public Works.





4 December 2009

Charles Evans
JoAnne Arnos
Co Chairs, Pacifica Open Space Committee
City Hall
170 Santa Maria Ave
Pacifica, CA 94044

Dear Mr. Evans and Ms. Arnos,

As requested in your letter of 18 March 2009, I here send you what I hope is a comprehensive list of management actions that you can take to protect Snowy Plovers, and co-incidentally other shorebirds, using Pacifica State Beach. I provided a brief narrative at the beginning of the recommendations to give you background on the issues surrounding the Snowy Plover and how I approached formulating the recommendation. I have kept them consistent with State and Federal regulations and policies. They have been reviewed internally at PRBO, by State Parks, and by the Fish and Wildlife Service, and their comments have been addressed in this final draft.

I applaud your efforts to protect the natural resources in your open space areas while providing for human use of those same areas. I hope the recommendations will be useful as you make management decisions for Pacifica State Beach.

Sincerely,

Lynne Stenzel PRBO Wetlands Ecologist

cc: assemblymember Jerry Hill



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Management Recommendations for Western Snowy Plovers at Pacifica State Beach Prepared by Lynne Stenzel, PRBO Wetlands Ecologist, (415) 868-0371 ext 307, lstenzel@prbo.org

Background: The Pacific coast population of the Western Snowy Plover has been listed as threatened since March 1993 under provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. This population is defined as those individuals nesting within 80 km (50 miles) of the Pacific Ocean. Destruction, modification, or degradation of habitat from a variety of factors is considered to be the primary threat to the plover (Western Snowy Plover (Charadrius alexandrinus) Pacific Coast Population Recovery Plan¹ – hereafter, The Recovery Plan). Specific factors identified include disturbance from humans, dogs, horses, and vehicles; shoreline development, including stabilization structures (jetties, groins, seawalls), sand removal and replenishment, and buildings and parking lots; invasions of non-native vegetation into shoreline areas; the expansion of non-native and feral predator populations; expansion of human-enhanced omnivore and predator populations, such as corvids and gulls; and the interactions among these factors. When also subject to these other factors, plovers likely may have diminished ability to respond to natural predators. Coastal plover habitat is potentially also subject to continuing loss and degradation from sea level rise.

Pacifica State Beach, a pocket beach at the lower end of San Pedro Valley in Pacifica, CA is approximately 1 km in length. It has been documented as a wintering area for up to more than 30 Snowy Plovers since 1979, when a statewide monitoring program for Snowy Plovers during the non-breeding season (July-April) was initiated by PRBO Conservation Science. Snowy Plovers may spend up to nine months a year in non-breeding habitat and, as such, these areas are important to the annual survival of the plover. Annual survival is generally considered to be the demographic rate of greatest influence to shorebird population trajectories², In a population viability analysis done on Snowy Plovers, the population trajectory was found to be highly sensitive to annual adult survival³.

While the beach strand habitat characteristics of Pacifica State Beach are similar to those of other California beaches on which Snowy Plovers nest, there was no documented nesting by Snowy Plovers on this beach until the observations of a local resident of Pacifica were made public in 2008^4 . Frequent monitoring of this beach in March through May could reveal pairs initiating nests. Our recommendations are focused on protecting non-breeding Snowy Plovers, but in the event that breeding plovers are found, additional actions will be required to protect nesting birds, including, potentially, predator management. Only persons listed as Authorized Individuals under a current USFWS recovery permit (or persons under their immediate – on site – supervision) may closely monitor nesting plovers on the California coast.

The following recommendations are based on the Recovery Plan (USFWS 2007) and on a Stepdown Narrative of Recovery Actions, a component of an earlier draft of the Plan providing more detail on specific actions. The Recovery Plan briefly tabulates the following activities requiring additional action at Pacifica State Beach: 1) enforcement of protective rules and regulations, 2) restricting pets, 3) use of exclusionary signage (location CA-48 in Table C-1 of The



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Recovery Plan), in addition to 4) ongoing monitoring of this beach. Our recommendations here include these and additional actions that will improve habitat and discourage human activity with potentially high negative impacts on Western Snowy Plovers at this beach. These management recommendations should be revised if plover nesting were to become regular again at Pacifica State Beach.

Recommendations to Protect Plovers from Excessive Disturbance:

- 1. The Crespi Drive path from the Community Center parking lot passes through the area frequented by the plovers. If the Crespi Drive path is considered a necessary current access point for the beach, use symbolic or snow fencing along the path to point foot traffic directly out toward the wet sand and consider rerouting the path so that it emerges on the beach closer to the bathhouse parking area to the south.
- 2. In general, limit beach access to the bathhouse parking area (near the south end of the beach), away from areas frequented by the plovers.
- 3. Install and maintain low but impassable fencing along the beach side of the bicycle path to discourage entry to the beach away from the primary beach access point.
- 4. Install and maintain symbolic fencing (cable through eyes in metal posts) on the upper beach parallel to the water line in the vicinity of the primary roosting area, between the Crespi Drive path and the dry creek bed near the north end of the beach, to provide an area of minimal disturbance for the roosting flock.
- 5. Restrict dogs from the beach. This recommendation is in compliance with State Park policy and Section 4312 of the California Code of Regulations, which prohibits dogs on state beaches in California.
- 6. Restrict activities and events that that would bring vehicles or horses onto the beach or that would include fireworks.
- 7. Prohibit kite-flying or overflights of hand gliders or kite surfers, especially if plovers nest.
- 8. Enforce regulations prohibiting drinking, littering, fires, overnight camping, etc.
- 9. Discourage the feeding of wildlife on the beach and provide predator-proof trash receptacles. Receptacles should be emptied daily.
- 10. Develop and implement training programs for enforcement personnel and others who work in snowy plover breeding habitat.
- 11. Provide informational signage and public outreach, as described below under recommendations 17-21 to discourage human behavior that creates excessive disturbance.

Additional notes:

On recommendations 1 & 2) The relatively small size of the beach at Pacifica may amplify the effect of high levels of human disturbance because plovers have little alternative refuge from human activities, either on Pacifica Beach or at nearby beaches. However, human activity tends to concentrate near access points and, therefore, disturbance to plovers may be reduced by limiting





beach access points and locating them away from roosting areas preferred by the plovers. Pacifica State Beach has two primary access points, although a recently-constructed bike path extending behind the entire length of the beach has facilitated egress on to the beach from any point along its length. The most frequently used plover roosting area is on the upper beach near the intersection of Crespi Drive and Highway 1. One of the primary access points, the parking lot near the south end of the beach, is away from the roosting area. However, a path onto the beach at the Crespi Drive intersection (frequently used by beach users parking at the Pacifica Community Center) passes next to and sometimes through the roosting flock. Ideally, access to the beach should be limited to the southern parking lot, but until that is possible or if it not possible, recommendations 2 or 3 may decrease disturbance to the flock.

On recommendation 3) Since the construction of the bicycle path, pedestrians and bicyclists have entered the beach from along most of its length. To minimize erosion of bluffs and protect the plovers and other beach resources, including fragile upper beach vegetation, beach entry should be restricted to specific entry points.

On recommendation 4) With this recommendation is the caution that fencing on an upper beach area may be subject to loss during the most severe storms, usually occurring between November and March. Use signs on fence posts informing beach users that the area is set aside for roosting plovers.

On recommendations 8 & 9) Training should be coordinated with the local Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement office. It is essential that local law enforcement personnel and wardens be thoroughly trained in procedures for conducting patrols in a manner that minimizes risk to plovers and be trained to handle potentially confrontational situations. In cases involving "take" (harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct) of listed species, it is essential that investigations be conducted only by trained, certified, and professional law enforcement agents. The local USFWS Law Enforcement office should be informed *immediately* whenever evidence of suspected take of snowy plovers is encountered.

Recommendations to Enhance, Restore, and Maintain Natural Beach Processes in the Coastal Strand Habitat of Snowy Plovers

- 12. Remove invasive non-native beach plants.
- 13. Replant native plant species of the upper beach and coastal strand plant community.
- 14. Implement and enforce anti-littering regulations and remove beach litter.
- 15. Avoid coastal construction, including seawalls and groins, unless they can be engineered to avoid the long-term loss of sand from Pacifica State Beach.
- 16. Remove predator perches and unnatural habitats (e.g. bury riprap that may house black rats and feral cats).
- 17. Protect beach habitat from oil and other chemical spills, including runoff from parking areas.





Additional notes:

The dynamic nature of beach strand habitats as storm-maintained ecosystems should be recognized and maintained. The actions listed here will also benefit other species in coastal strand habitat and should help to maintain this important buffer habitat between land and sea as sea level rises. Activities that should be avoided include construction of rock jetties, seawalls, and other structures that result in accelerated erosion of beaches and reduce sand transport, and other development that will destroy or degrade snowy plover breeding habitat.

On recommendation 11) Plovers and other shorebirds are species that use open to sparsely vegetated habitat. Plants such as European Beach Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) and sea fig (*Carpobrotus chilensis*) form solid, heavily vegetated areas and stabilize dunes with steep foreslopes that degrade or destroy habitat for plovers. Removal of exotic vegetation restores the dynamic nature of a sand dune system by allowing sand to move and dunes to shift.

On recommendation 12) Native dune plant species such as native dune grass (*Leymus mollis*), yellow sand verbena (*Abronia* latifolia.), whiteleaf saltbush (*Atriplex leucophylla*), California saltbush (*Atriplex californica*), grey beach pea (*Lathyrus littoralis*), beach morning glory (*Calystegia soldanella*), pink sand-verbena (*Abronia umbellata*), and silver bursage (*Ambrosia chamissonis*) are among the species that would be suitable to plant for vegetation restoration at Pacifica State Beach. Seeds of local native dune plants collected within approximately 32 kilometers (20 miles) of the site to be planted are preferred for replacement plant stock. Native dune mat vegetation is typically low-lying, and can provide nest cover while allowing plovers to see approaching predators

On recommendation 13) Trash, including fishing line which can entangle birds, should be selectively removed from the beach manually, but natural materials, including shells, seaweed, and driftwood, should be left in place. Beach litter removal should be done on foot, without the use of mechanized rakes. Mechanized beach-raking removes benthic and surface food sources for plovers and other shorebirds.

On recommendation 15) Where feasible, land managers should remove from plover breeding or roosting locations any exotic vegetation, perches, driftwood structures (but not naturally beach-cast driftwood), and other features that attract avian and mammalian predators. Where signs and fences are necessary as part of management to protect plover breeding areas, attempts should be made to design them in a way that will deter their use by predators (e.g., install spikes on fence posts).

On recommendation 16) Although containment and clean up of oil and other chemical spills is directed by an Incident Command System (ICS) in California, local authorities should be coordinated with ICS and alert them to the presence of Snowy Plovers on Pacifica State Beach. More information on clean-up, damage assessment, and habitat restoration is available through the





California Department of Fish and Game and the U. S. Coast Guard. Runoff from parking areas and roads is regulated by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the City of Pacifica.

Recommendation for Partnerships and Public Outreach on Snowy Plovers at Pacifica State Beach

- 18. Provide informational signage at the bathhouse parking lot regarding plovers and the impacts of humans on breeding and wintering plovers, and provide information on what the public can do to reduce actual and potential impacts to the local plover population.
- 19. Post clear signage at access point(s) on Pacifica State Beach about dog regulations, fencing, and prohibiting littering or feeding of wildlife.
- 20. Establish cooperative agreements or memoranda of understanding with one or more organizations or agencies that can provide advisory assistance with regard to protecting natural resources and working with federally listed species.
- 21. Establish and support a local working group, which could create a docent program for plover protection, take responsibility for monitoring the beach, and coordinate and communicate with the local Recovery Unit for the Snowy Plover (Region 4).
- 22. Prohibit feral cat feeding stations in the vicinity of the beach and educate landowners about the effects of feral cats on wildlife⁵. Encourage adjacent landowners to secure food trash in wildlife/animal-proof receptacles and to feed pets indoors.

Additional notes:

On recommendations 17 & 18) An effective means of signage at some locations has been to educate local school children about beach and coastal strand ecology and enlist these students to create signs asking beach visitors to help protect plovers and other beach plants and animals. Signs created by local school groups experience less vandalism, and are well received by the general public.

On recommendation 20) The local working group could create a website and, possibly, hand out materials and/or parking lot displays with location-specific interpretive materials on plovers, beach and shoreline ecology, and information about how we can share the beach with birds and other wild organisms. A representative from the local working group should attend one or both of Recovery Unit 4 biannual meetings and/or the annual range-wide meeting for the Snowy Plover. The local working group could also institute a docent program at the beach to contact and educate beach users about plovers.

Recommendation Regarding Monitoring of Snowy Plovers at Pacifica State Beach

- 23. Monitor plover presence on Pacifica State Beach.
- 24. Monitor the efficacy of implementing management recommendations on Pacifica SB.





Additional notes:

On recommendation 22) Monthly or bi-monthly surveys to document the total number of plovers and the presence and identities of color-banded Snowy Plovers on Pacifica State Beach should be continued from July though April each year. (Information on natal origin and movements of Snowy Plovers is obtained through tracking color-banded individuals.) Persons conducting these surveys should be trained by Authorized Persons¹ to minimize undue disturbance to roosting and feeding plovers. From mid-March through April, extra surveys should be undertaken by Authorized Persons to determine whether pairs are making nest scrapes and laying eggs. If such nesting evidence is found, Authorized Persons should take over monitoring of the beach for the duration of the nesting season, and nesting habitat should be protected. Pacifica State Beach should be covered during both the breeding and wintering state-wide window surveys. Survey data submitted to PRBO should include the date of the survey, start and end times of the survey, area covered for plovers, total number of plovers counted, total number of plovers whose legs were checked for bands, total number of banded plovers, color combinations of banded birds, and activities and locations of birds (roosting versus feeding).

On recommendation 23) Monitoring of the effectiveness of management measures should include noting the date by which recommendations have been initiated or implemented and conducting regular surveys to record human beach use, compliance, and violations. Management monitoring can be carried out in coordination with plover monitoring (i.e. during or directly before or after surveys). Data that should be collected include the date and time of the survey; number, location (wet sand versus dry sand), and activities of people and dogs, violations (e.g. people entering symbolically-fenced areas, dog issues, or problems with trash), and the number, location (wet sand, dry sand, aerial) of corvids (ravens or crows), hawks, falcons, or other natural predators on the beach.

¹ U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2007. Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) Pacific Coast Population Recovery Plan. Volume 2: Appendices. 470 pp.

² Sandercock, B. K. 2003. Estimation of survival rates for wader populations: a review of mark-recapture methods. Wader Study Group Bulletin 100:163-174.

³ Nur, N. G. W. Page, and L. E. Stenzel. 1999. Population viability analysis for Pacific coast Western Snowy Plovers. Appendix D in Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) Pacific Coast Population Recovery Plan. Volume 2: 40 pp.

⁴ See attached copy of notarized document.



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⁵ Winter, L., and G. E. Wallace. 2006. Impacts of feral and free-ranging cats on bird species of conservation concern. American Bird Conservancy News and Reports, 28 pp. and references cited therein. (Available online from the American Bird Conservancy – www.abcbirds.org)

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County of San Mateo	}
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personally appeared John Simpson	Name(s) of Signer(s)
JACQUELYN J. GALLOWAY Commission # 1784096 Natury PubBic - Collectric Ban Bactes County bly Cosm. Septes Doc 8, 2011	who proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me the he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorize capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument. I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the law of the State of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.
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I grew up in Australia, where I started my career at the age of 14 as a merchant seaman, and traveled the world's oceans. I had the interest and opportunity to observe birds on voyages around South America, Australasia and other parts of the world.

I moved to Pacifica in 1966, where I worked as a painter for several projects, including the Oddstad tract housing development. On weekends and daily after workdays, I frequented Pacifica State Beach to take my son for walks, to surf, and to look at the birds, seals and other wildlife. In the period from when I first started walking Pacifica State Beach in 1966 through 1971 nesting Western Snowy Plovers were always present in the spring, when sometimes they would have two sequential nests.

The most nests 1 saw at any one time is four, each with anywhere from two to three eggs, usually 3 eggs in a nest. The nests were just an impression in the sand. The eggs would hatch and young would be almost impossible to see, but you could see them if they moved at all.

The birds used the part of the beach that is above the tide line and west of the first dune closest to Highway 1. The area they used had a clear view of the ocean, with no other dunes obstructing a view of the waves.

Plovers were generally seen together in small groups of up to 30 birds. There were lots of birds on Pacifica State Beach in the late 1960s through early 1970s, total number of plovers on any given day could be 30.

Plovers could be seen foraging in the sandy areas, where they are kelp flies and other bugs. They would forage with the other birds, singly—so that you might see a plover or two in with the sanderlings or other shorebirds.

In 1993 river sand was brought in to the dunes, complete with living clams embedded. Source of the soil was not the creek; most came from the delta upriver I expect. I did not see any nesting plovers after that, though wintering plovers are still present in smaller numbers to this day.

John Simpson 1 Malavear Court Pacifica, California 94044 March 4, 2009

March 4, 2009

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John Swift

October 15, 2009

Recommendation from the Pedro Point Community Association (PPCA) to the Pacifica City Council concerning potential Snowy Plover habitat at Linda Mar State Beach

<u>Background</u>: It has come to the attention of the PPCA that the Pacifica Open Space Committee (OSC) has recommended to the City Council the restriction of dog walking on Linda Mar State Beach to the side walks along the highway and therefore banning dogs from all sand areas of Linda Mar Beach due to the potential for Snowy Plover habitat in the dune area north of the parking lot.

As part of the recommendation the OSC has presented personal commentary as scientific evidence that the Snowy Plover is adversely affected by any dog activity more so than other human activity and therefore dogs should be banned from the beach. OSC is also challenging the city's current management of the state beach.

Current information concerning OSC resolution:

- 1. The president of the PPCA, Sam Casillas, has repeatedly requested from OSC any scientific evidence to show that the Snowy Plovers have been adversely affected by on-leash dog activity in this habitat or any other habitat. At this time, no scientific evidence has been presented and only opinion has been offered.
- 2. In conversations with OSC members, they have pointed out the problem of off-leash dogs on the beach and not lawful dog walking activity.
- 3. Multiple beach observations by members of the PPCA have shown that all bird life on the beach is not more affected by dogs than any other activity and that the real threats to the potential Snowy Plover dune habitat could come from coyotes, feral cats, homeless encampments and illegal parties in the dunes which are not addressed by OSC.
- 4. It is also recognized that at anytime one-third to one-half of beach users are dogs owners. In banning dogs from the beach, their owners would go to other dog friendly beaches which will lead to a huge potential in lost revenue for Pacifica as dog owners go elsewhere to walk their dogs.
- 5. The PPCA recognizes that that city of Pacifica has managed Linda Mar State Beach in a very professional manner balancing the needs all our recreational activities while protecting the environment.

Recommendations from PPCA to the City Council:

The PPCA recommends that the OSC resolution to ban dogs from Linda Mar Beach not be considered and instead follow these recommendations:

- a) Currently there is a leash law for dogs and the PPCA encourages the city to enforce the leash law vigorously.
- b) We encourage the approval and use the dog park at Sanchez for citizens who want to run their dogs off-leash
- c) We ask the city to consider installing a protective fence around the dune area to protect the potential habitat and post educational signs to build awareness of the Plover habitat.

The PPCA is very interested in the protection of any endangered wildlife. We believe these recommendations will bring more attention to the wildlife and their needs without compromising the recreational activity on Linda Mar Beach which would adversely affect the local economy and freedom of use for residents of Pacifica.