

Watch out for signs that protect snowy plover nests on Oregon's beaches

Beachgoers are urged to help recovery efforts of the threatened western snowy plover by respecting nesting areas and beach restrictions during nesting season, March 15 through Sept. 15.

Beachgoers will see signs and ropes that identify sensitive western snowy plover nesting areas and will need to adhere to any posted restrictions.

These federally protected shorebirds nest on open sand along Oregon's beaches. Nests, and especially chicks, are well-camouflaged.

During nesting season, human disturbances can flush adult plovers away from their nests as they attempt to defend their young from the perceived predator. Left alone too long, eggs or chicks can die from exposure, predators or people.

"We're making great strides in reversing the downward slide of this species," said Cindy Burns, Siuslaw National Forest wildlife biologist. "But it takes all of us, so we hope people will do their part to understand nesting season rules and to share the beach this spring and summer."

Certain beaches are known plover nesting areas. On these plover beaches, the dry sand and dunes are closed to all access, except along official trails, to protect eggs and chicks.

Visitors may see roped off areas within these plover management areas, which serve to protect the most sensitive habitat; however, all dry sand on both sides of the rope is closed, except on designated trails.

Wet sand areas on plover beaches remain open to foot and equestrian traffic (no dogs, kites, drones, camping, bicycles or motor vehicles are allowed).

These plover nesting areas are spread along the entire coast and collectively comprise only about 40 miles of Oregon's 362 miles of shoreline.

"Visitors will have access to hundreds of miles of beaches without these seasonal restrictions," said Laurel Hillmann, ocean shores specialist for Oregon State Parks. "By planning your trip, you can enjoy the coast and help keep this sensitive bird safe."

The western snowy plover is a federally protected shorebird. Nesting areas within the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area include the following (signs are posted at all nesting beach access points):

- Baker/Sutton beaches
- Siltcoos estuary south to within a half mile of Sparrow Park Road, which includes:
 - Oregon Dunes Day Use beach
 - Tahkenitch Creek estuary
- Ten Mile Creek estuary, starting from ¼ mile south of the Douglas/Coos County line to the Coast Guard South OHV Trail

Detailed information about nesting restrictions and site locations, as well as links to resources from Oregon State Parks, can be found on the Siuslaw website at fs.usda.gov/siuslaw.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed western snowy plovers as a threatened species in 1993. Habitat loss from invasive plants, as well as human disturbances, including litter and discarded food scraps that attract predators, have contributed to the birds' decline.

The Oregon Dunes Restoration Collaborative is working with land managers to develop and implement a restoration strategy as well as raise public aware-

ness about the need to restore the dunes ecosystem for snowy plover, rare plants and animals, and the unique recreation opportunities offered here.



Courtesy photo by Adam Kotaich

Snowy plover chicks in a nesting area

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est management activities. Most of the elements of the Westerman bill were not included in the omnibus, so there is still much work to be done here – and the rest of this discussion might play out in the Farm Bill later this year.

- **Suppression:** The bill would direct annual funding at the 10-year average (more or less), but then creates additional budget authority for a contingency fund for suppression. Starting in FY2020, there is a steadily increasing budget authority that can be tapped — starting at \$2.25 billion and rising to \$2.95 billion in 2027. USDA/DOI have to submit an annual report to Congress detailing the cost effectiveness of suppression activities, as well as the effectiveness of pre-fire fuels reduction treatments on the ground.
- **Forest Management Provisions:** The bill amends the Healthy Forest Restoration Act to encourage additional fuels treatments to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire:
 - **Collaborative forestry projects** (in dry forests) up to 3,000 acres are categorically excluded from NEPA review, if they maximize old growth characteristics, located within the WUI (wildland-urban interface) or with extreme fire risk (if outside the WUI), and consistent with the relevant land management plan. Federal agencies must provide an annual report of the use of this any other CEs. (This might be of interest for Anchor Forest projects.)
 - **Fuel breaks:** Allows these projects to occur with only an action/no-action alternative.
 - **Stewardship contracts:** Agencies may enter into 20-year stewardship contracts under HFRA, with a preference to contractors who would “promote an innovative use of forest products, including cross-laminated timber.”
- **Cottonwood Decision fix:** Responding to the court decision regarding programmatic consultation, the bill frees land management agencies from immediately having to consult (under ESA) on land management plans when a new species is listed, or critical habitat is designated, under the ESA.
- **Secure Rural Schools Extension:** The bill extends through FY18 the SRS program at 95 percent of the last appropriated level (before expiration of the program).
- **Federal commercial timber programs:** The bill reduces the Forest Service's timber program by \$1.8 million (to \$366 million) and holds the O&C lands timber program level at \$94.4 million.
- **Forest management for subsistence uses:** The bill provides \$2,500,000 for the Management of National Forest Lands for Subsistence Uses.

Other Provisions

VAWA: \$2 million in new funding for Tribal justice support. \$4,000,000 is for grants to assist Tribal governments in exercising special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction.

Opioid Response: Within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the bill provides \$1 billion for a new State Opioid Response Grant program, which will include a \$50 million set-aside for Tribes. It also includes \$723 million for the Mental Health Block Grant, which is \$160 million more than in fiscal year 2017, as well as \$100 million for new grants to communities and community organizations that meet criteria for certified community behavioral health centers. The bill provides an additional \$132 million to targeted programs throughout SAMHSA addressing mental health and opioid use disorders.

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Siletz Community Health Clinic
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The Community Health Advocate's (CHA) provides a variety of services to tribal members relating to healthcare. CHAs advocate for individuals, identify services available to tribal members, and promote wellness individually and community wide. There is a CHA in every area office. For Eugene please call (541) 484-4234, Portland (503) 238-1512, Salem (503) 390-9494, Siletz (541) 444-1030. We look forward to hearing from you!!

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