

## News Release

Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept.

For Immediate Release

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### Meeting will share information about possible recreation changes on Necanicum Spit in 2013

Gearhart OR – The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) will host an informational meeting at the Bob Chisholm Community Center in Seaside on January 22, 2013, from 6-8 p.m. to answer questions about proposed recreation changes on the Necanicum Spit coming in 2013. The changes -- keeping dogs on leashes during part of the year and re-routing a trail away from a dry sand area -- are driven by Oregon's commitment to retain recreation access while providing habitat for western snowy plovers, a shorebird.

Western snowy plovers are native to the Oregon coast and are protected by both the federal and state law. Plovers currently nest on the Oregon coast from Lane County south, and in Washington at Leadbetter Point and Midway Beach, approximately 40 miles north of Astoria. Their numbers are slowly increasing; an estimated 290 adult plovers live in Oregon now, a record high since monitoring began in 1990.

Under the Endangered Species Act, if plovers begin nesting in a new area, beach closures could be required to protect plovers wherever the birds nest. Instead of allowing plovers to affect Oregon's public beaches in this unpredictable way, OPRD took a different approach. After a substantial public comment period, the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission adopted the Habitat Conservation Plan for Western Snowy Plovers in 2010. Under the coast-wide plan, if plovers nest in an area **outside the designated recovery spots**, the individual nest will be protected, but the beach will remain open to the public.

To protect recreation on the ocean shore and help the plover at the same time, OPRD worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to focus habitat management on a few designated spots on the north coast such as the Necanicum Spit. In 2013, park staff will ask visitors to voluntarily keep dogs leashed and to avoid crossing the dry sand to reach the ocean on the very southern tip of the spit (see attached map). These voluntary changes would become a requirement in 2014, and are necessary for Oregon to comply with the habitat plan. The area is already closed to driving, and that rule will continue. An informal trail on city land leading to this dry sand area could be rerouted to protect beach access by directing it north. The January 22 meeting is a chance to hear more and ask questions about the proposed changes.

More information is online at <http://tinyurl.com/oregonplovers> . The Bob Chisholm Community Center is located at 1225 Avenue A, Seaside, (503) 738-7393.

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