

## **News Release**

Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept.

For Immediate Release

**Nov. 27, 2012**

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

Warrenton OR – The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) will host an informational meeting at Warrenton Community Center on December 11, 2012, from 6-8 p.m. to answer questions about proposed recreation changes on the Clatsop Spit coming in 2013. The changes are driven by Oregon's commitment to provide 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 on Midway Beach in Washington state 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 Clatsop Spit. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers leases the spit to OPRD and is reviewing proposed changes that would allow the department to implement seasonal recreation restrictions, including requiring dogs to be leashed from March to September, and closing vehicle access to the beach during the same period.

In 2013, park staff will ask visitors to voluntarily keep dogs leashed and to avoid driving off the road to reach the portion of the beach facing the Columbia River. These voluntary changes would become a requirement in 2014, and are necessary for Oregon to comply with the habitat plan. The December 11 meeting is a chance to hear more and ask questions about the proposed changes.

The other two recovery areas—portions of Necanicum and Nehalem Spits—will be the subject of public information meetings in January (dates to be announced later).

More information is online at <http://tinyurl.com/oregonplovers>. The Warrenton Community Center is located at 225 South Main Avenue, Warrenton, OR 97146, (503) 861-2233.

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