

County: **San Luis Obispo**
 USGS Quad: **Morro Bay South**

Thomas Guide Location
 631 G-3
 NOAA Chart: **Estero Bay 18703**

Latitude N
 35.3406
 Longitude W
 120.8411

Last Page Update : 5/1/2014

SITE DESCRIPTION:

Morro Bay Natural Reserve State Park. See Division F map. Chorro Creek Inlet, sub-site within Morro Bay. Provides freshwater to the estuary (one of two creeks). Chorro Creek supports an assemblage of native fish. Further inland, Chorro Creek supports dense riparian vegetation, which serves as important habitat for numerous species of birds. Chorro Creek is an area of special biological importance and is considered steelhead trout (threatened) critical habitat.

Creek channels through extensive salt marsh area dominated by pickleweed. In some areas of slightly higher ground, the pickleweed is mixed with patches of saltgrass and jaumea. This area is an important shorebird and waterfowl feeding area. Some birds also use the marsh habitat for nesting and resting. Morro Bay has large expanse of salt marshes, tidal flats, and eel grass beds, one of the most extensive in California. Morro Bay is utilized by over 40 special, threatened, or endangered species. Morro Bay is an integral part of the Pacific Flyway.

SEASONAL and SPECIAL RESOURCE CONCERN

Most species which utilize Chorro Creek are year round residents, however some are seasonal. Red-legged frog breeding season is Nov.-April. Steelhead (critical habitat) peak spawning March - July. Tidewater goby peak nesting in estuary sediments is April-July. Designated critical habitat for leatherback sea turtles (endangered), most commonly observed Aug. - Nov.

RESOURCES OF PRIMARY CONCERN

The California black rail is an endangered bird that may be found in the Chorro Creek area. Hundreds of shore birds, waders, waterfowl and seabirds including black brandts, marbled godwits, willets, curlews, terns, loons, brown pelicans, and American avocets. Endangered species black rail, California least tern, and the threatened western snowy plover.

Red-legged frogs (federally threatened) and western pond turtles (species of special concern) can be found in this creek.

Chorro Creek is habitat to steelhead trout (threatened species, spawning and nursery habitat), three-spined stickleback, prickly Sculpin, and possibly tidewater goby (endangered species).

CULTURAL, HISTORIC, and ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITIES

Contact SHPO and Native American Heritage Commission

KEY CONTACTS: Trustee (T); Entry/Owner/Access (E); Cultural (C); or Other Assistance (O)

Type	Name / Title	Organization	Phone
E/T	District Office	State Parks & Recreation Dept.	(805) 927-2065
E	Eric Endersby Harbor Manager	Morro Bay Harbor Dept	(805) 772-6254
C	Lynn Gamble Historic Info Center	SHPO/UCSB	(805) 893-7341
O	Adrienne Harris Director	Morro Bay National Estuary Program	(805) 772-3834
T	Mike Harris Sea otter expert	CDFW-OSPR	(805) 772-1135
O	Brian Hatfield Marine mammal expert	Bio Res Div. USGS	(805) 927-3893
T	Jenny Marrek Biologist	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	(805) 644-1766
C	Larry Meyer	Native American Heritage Commission	(916) 373-3712
T	Becky Ota	CDFW for MPAs	(650) 631-6789
C	SHPO	State Office of Historic Preservation	(916) 445-7000
T/E	Dispatch State Parks	State Dept. Parks and Recreation	(951) 443-2969
O	Cory Wadley Chief	U.S. Coast Guard Morro Bay Station	(805) 772-2167
T	Steve Wertz	CDFW for MPAs	(562) 342-7184

ADDITIONAL SITE SUMMARY COMMENTS:

4-225 -A Site Strategy - Chorro Creek Inlet

County and Thomas Guide Location

631 G-3 San Luis Obispo

NOAA CHART

Esterro Bay 18703

4-225 -A

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Longitude W

35.3406 120.8411

CONCERNS and ADVICE to RESPONDERS:

Last Page Update : 3/31/2011

Fish Disturbance - Avoid disturbing bottom lagoon sediments; may be tidewater gobies especially April-July goby nesting season. Upstream is steelhead trout critical habitat, peak spawning March - July. If creek conditions allow, boom deployment and recovery to be done by only having one person slowly walk across the creek to position the boom (and fence posts on the bank) to reduce disturbance. Limit disturbing creek to reduce turbidity. Equipment and foot traffic entering wetted areas should be avoided to the maximum extent practical to prevent crushing tidewater gobies, their burrows, and eggs. Any anchors deployed in water should be placed in waters greater than 4 feet deep to avoid crushing tidewater goby burrows. If supplemental water is used to flush recommend gradually increasing the intensity/volume during the flush.

Wetland Habitat – Mud flats and marshlands contain fragile habitat subject to damage from human activities such as walking and vehicle use. Oil can be trampled into sediments by responders where it will not be recoverable. Avoid walking in mudflats and marshy areas of wetlands and waterways whenever possible. Use skiffs to access response sites if conditions permit. When crews must walk in soft bottom wetland areas to access cleanup sites, restrict the number and size of pathways. Mark authorized pathways with flagging or tape. Place temporary ramps (e.g. plywood sheets) in sensitive marshy areas where heavy use is expected.

HAZARDS and RESTRICTIONS:

Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, USFWS, and State Dept. of Parks and Recreation should be consulted before staging equipment and heavy traffic are permitted. Morro Bay is also designated as the Morro Bay State Marine Recreational Management Area MPA; and is governed by special protections established by the DFW Marine Region.

SITE STRATEGIES

Strategy 4-225.1 Objective: Exclude oil from entering creek.

Place sorbent boom at creek mouth staked in place with, for example, fence posts. Boom should be placed as close as possible, where the marsh vegetation (Pickelweed) ends and the mudflats begin. Tend boom every tidal cycle. See strategy diagram. Chorro Creek Inlet can be accessed by walking along edge of mudflats at low tide in front of marsh vegetation which can be accessed by a hiking path at the south end of State Park Marina parking lot. The number of personnel walking on the flats should be kept to a minimum. Other booming material could be considered based on conditions at the time (based on water flow, currents, etc.) , i.e. short skirted containment boom, excelsior fencing, sweep boom, or hay bales should also be considered.

Check/maintain boom for effectiveness and integrity, overwash, and leakage problems, boom positioning and security, and sorbent replacement as necessary.

Strategy 4-225.2 Objective: Exclude oil from getting into creek/estuary with containment boom.

When creek mouth is open block entrance with a short skirted containment boom at appropriate angle for swift currents and changing tidal influences. When suitable berm materials are unavailable and/or when tidal flows, waterflows, or water depths are too great for berming install exclusion booms near mouth of Inlet/lagoon using short skirted boom and snare boom. Install boom in a configuration/angle which blocks channel and diverts oil to a collection point. If needed, line river/stream bank, rip-rap, side channels, and sandy beaches within lagoon, seaward of the exclusion/containment booms to restrict oil to open water area of main channel to protect vegetated banks and sensitive areas within the inlet/estuary. Use swamp boom backed by sorbent booms, if waters are shallower, and use harbor boom backed by sorbent booms, when water depths are greater. Check/maintain boom for effectiveness and integrity, overwash, and leakage problems, boom positioning and security, and sorbent replacement as necessary.

strategy number	harbor boom	swamp boom	Other boom type	sorb boom	Anchoring type and gear	Boom boat	Skiffs punts	Skimmers No Type	Special Equipment or comment and kinds	staff deploy	Staff tend
4-225.1				450				1 SSS	fence posts	4	
4-225.2	0	450		0	2 anchor 40 lb	0	0	1 SSS	0	4	4

LOGISTICS

DIRECTIONS: to site (by land and/or by water, to nearest launch ramp and are access permits required.)

From the south take Hwy 101 N to Morro Bay- Hwy 1 exit in San Luis Obispo (turn right on Santa Rosa St. which is Hwy 1). In Morro Bay take the Morro Bay Blvd. Exit off Hwy 1. Go straight onto Morro Bay Blvd. To Main St. and turn left on Main St. Main St. turns into State Park Road. Marina/trail to creek is across the street from golf course on State Park Rd. From the north take Hwy 101 S (or 5 S to Hwy 41 W to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1 S), and take the Main St. exit, turn right off Hwy 1 in Morro Bay. Go through town and Main St. turns into State Park Rd. Morro Bay Natural Reserve State Park.

LAND ACCESS: Foot access only from State Park Marina parking lot; kayak, airboat

WATER LOGISTICS:

Limitations: depth, obstruction

Launching, Loading, Docking Morro Bay boat launch facility.

and Services Available:

FACILITIES, STAGING AREAS, POSSIBLE FIELD POSTS AND EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE:

Staging Area: Marina parking lot.

Command Post: U.S. Coast Guard office in Morro Bay or CDFW office in San Luis Obispo.

Airports: SLO County Airport is approx. 30 min. south, Paso Robles Airport is approx. 45 min. inland.

COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS:**ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL COMMENTS:**

