

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

Thomas Guide Location  
 631  
 NOAA Chart: **Estero Bay 18703**

Latitude N  
 35.3458  
 Longitude W  
 120.8623

Last Page Update : 5/1/2014

#### SITE DESCRIPTION:

See Division G map. The Morro Bay Sand Spit (approx. 5 mi. long) is the Morro Dunes Natural Preserve and is within Montana De Oro State Park. At the southeast end of the Morro Dunes Natural Preserve is the Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve. The beach is part of the Morro Beach Pismo Clam Preserve. It is a fine-medium grained sandy beach that fronts Morro Bay. Designated critical habitat for threatened western snowy plovers.

#### SEASONAL and SPECIAL RESOURCE CONCERN

Species of concern are present year round. Western Snowy Plover nesting season mid March-mid Sept.

#### RESOURCES OF PRIMARY CONCERN

Western snowy plovers nest on this beach. Snowy plovers may have active nests, or chicks may be actively moving about the area. Care should be given to minimize disturbance and avoid injury to either nests, or chicks. Snowy plovers are small, white and tan colored shore birds. Beach bird-nesting sites are shallow depressions scratched out from the sand surface on sandy beaches above the highest tide line. The nest sites are typically very well disguised and difficult to see, even for trained eyes. Nest sites may contain either eggs, or chicks which are potentially vulnerable to trampling by vehicles or foot traffic. Snowy plover adults and chicks are known to move between the nest sites and the active water line. Over-wintering snowy plover adults may be foraging throughout the response area.

Shorebirds include western gulls, willets, sandpipers, black oyster catchers (on rocky intertidal); sea birds include brown pelicans, pelagic cormorants, grebes, loons, scoters, common murre.

Sea otters and kelp beds common.

This area is habitat for western snowy plovers (federally threatened), California least terns (endangered), and peregrine falcons (delisted in Aug 1999) hunt on the sand spit. Loons, surf scoters, grebes, and brown pelicans can be found in this area.

Southern sea otters can be observed offshore, harbor seals can be found in this area.

Designated critical habitat for leatherback sea turtles (endangered), most commonly observed Aug. – Nov. The Morro Bay kangaroo rat (endangered) potentially may still be found in the back dune area. The black legless lizard, Morro shoulderband snail, and Morro Bay butterfly are all sensitive dune species.

Numerous listed plant species grow on the spit including beach spectacle pod, jones layia, blochman's dudlea, miles miklvetch, San Luis Obispo monardella

#### CULTURAL, HISTORIC, and ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITIES

This area is also of archaeological concern. 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
T	Melissa Boggs Environmental Scientist	CDFW-OSPR	(805) 558-1005
O	Eric Endersby Harbor Manager	Morro Bay Harbor Dept	(805) 772-6254
T	Nancy Frost Ca Least Tern Breeding	CDFW	(858) 467-4208
C	Lynn Gamble Historic Info Center	SHPO/UCSB	(805) 893-7341
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	Elizabeth Petras Biologist	National Marine Fisheries Service	(562) 980-3238
C	SHPO	State Office of Historic Preservation	(916) 445-7000
T/E	Dispatch State Parks	State Dept. Parks and Recreation	(951) 443-2969
O	Francis Villablanca Morro Bay K-Rat expert	Cal Poly	(805) 756-2200
O	Cory Wadley Chief	U.S. Coast Guard Morro Bay Station	(805) 772-2167

#### ADDITIONAL SITE SUMMARY COMMENTS:

## 4-300 -A Site Strategy - Morro Bay Sand Spit

County and Thomas Guide Location

631 San Luis Obispo

NOAA CHART

Estero Bay 18703

4-300 -A

Latitude N

Longitude W

35.3458 120.8623

### CONCERNS and ADVICE to RESPONDERS:

Last Page Update : 5/1/2014

**PRIMARY PLOVER PROTECTION STRATEGY:** During nesting season, March-September, to aid in avoiding damage to nests, consider delineation of nesting areas and designate responder "pathways" with flagging or tape. Nests and critical habitat protection areas will require oversight by natural resource specialist prior to response effort execution. All responders should be briefed on procedures for avoiding birds and nest sites to aid in minimizing damage to nest sites and associated wildlife. Oil spill response and cleanup activity should be limited to locations below high tide line unless otherwise authorized by trustee agency specialist, or designee (biological monitor). The area to be protected will be monitored by an assigned biological monitor. Oil removal will be conducted by hand crews unless other methods are recommended by the biological monitor. Pre-clean the beach and stockpile kelp and surfgrass rack in designated areas for re-distribution after response efforts are completed. A staging area will be determined as most suitable for response and natural resource protection. Travel on beach should be restricted to the wet sand as much as possible; vehicle traffic should be operated at slow enough speeds to avoid/minimize impacts to wildlife (15 MPH); if possible avoid driving over wrack.

**SECONDARY PLOVER PROTECTION STRATEGY:** At the discretion of the biological monitor, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snowy plover or least tern eggs may be removed from nest's by authorized and qualified personnel to an approved facility to avoid injury. This determination will be made on-site utilizing oil trajectory and oil impact timing information.

### OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS:

Oil Burial - Wind drift and sand may bury beached oil.

Dune Habitats – Minimize mechanical and human activities in vegetated dune habitat.

Sensitive Biota - Nearshore waters include sensitive rafting areas for birds, sea otters, and other marine mammals. To protect seabirds, limit spill response activities within 1,000 feet of nesting seabirds when possible. Try to remain at least 100 yards away from marine mammals and sea turtles and if approached closely by a marine mammal or turtle while motoring, reduce speed and shift to neutral; do not engage props until the animals are observed at the surface, clear of the vessel.

**SHORELINE PRE-CLEANING** may be warranted before oil reaches the beach when the shoreline is covered with kelp, driftwood, etc which could become oiled and create more oiled waste. Consult with trustees prior to engaging in activities on shoreline. Move unoiled vegetation, driftwood, etc. above the high tide line. When the shoreline is narrow, un-oiled debris may need to be stockpiled elsewhere. It is suggested that photos be taken to document distribution of beach debris prior to collection so that it can be replaced to its pre-spill distribution when spill cleanup is complete. Pre-cleaning of shorelines should be conducted by hand crews to the greatest practical extent to minimize disturbance to wildlife and their habitats.

### HAZARDS and RESTRICTIONS:

Montana de Oro State Park. At times the front gate can be locked. Normally vehicles can drive on this paved road to the parking area where there is another locked gate. To open gates call State Parks dispatch (951) 443-2969. This road ends but 4-wheel drive vehicles can access sand spit to the north and can drive south to Hazard Reef. WW II training area, heavy equipment could expose old ordinances. AT&T fiber optics cables under beach. Dept of Fish and Wildlife, USFWS, and State Dept of Parks and Rec. should be consulted before staging motorized vehicles.

## SITE STRATEGIES

Strategy 4-300.1 Objective: Deflect or exclude oil from impacting sand spit.

Offshore containment and recovery (OCR) is the preferred option although heavy surf may hinder these operations. No specific response equipment listed due to the many variables associated with each spill regarding OCR. Early consideration should be given to the use of applied response technologies.

strategy number	harbor boom	swamp boom	Other boom type	sorb boom	Anchoring no type and gear	Boom boat	Skiffs punts	Skimmers No Type	Special Equipment or comment No and kinds	staff deploy	Staff tend
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4-300.1

Offshore containment & recovery

## 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 Los Osos Valley Rd (LOVR) exit, just south of San Luis Obispo. Take LOVR until it turns into Pecho Valley Rd. Take Pecho Valley Rd. 2 miles to the "Sand Spit Beach Access Day Use Area" turn off. This road ends, but 4-wheel drive vehicles can access sand spit to the north and can drive south to Hazard Reef. At times the front gate can be locked. Normally vehicles can drive on this paved road to the parking area where there is another locked gate. To open gates call State Parks dispatch (951) 443-2969.

From the north: Take Hwy 101 S (or 5 S to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1 S ) to LOVR exit . Follow directions from above.

**LAND ACCESS:** 4WD, foot or ATV access, 4-wheel drive with experienced dune driver.

**WATER LOGISTICS:**

Limitations: depth, obstruction

Launching, Loading, Docking Morro Bay boat launch  
and Services Available:

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

Staging Area: Parking area at Sand Spit Beach access Day use area (phone, electricity and restrooms available, no lighting).

Command Post: State Parks Headquarters at Montana de Oro State Park (small building). U.S. Coast Guard office in Morro Bay. CDFW office in San Luis Obispo.

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

**COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS:****ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL COMMENTS:**

