

4-040-A Site Summary - Elephant Seal Beaches (N&S of Pt. Piedras Blancas)**4-040-A***County:* San Luis Obispo **ACP Division/Segment:** SL - A - S04 SL - B - S01*NOAA Chart:* 18700*Map Book:* 324 F-5*Decimal Degrees:* 35.66289 -121.26495**Site Description:**

Sandy Pocket beaches just north and south of Point Piedras Blancas continuing south approximately 2 miles to Elephant Seal viewing Vista Turnout (within Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, managed by Sanctuary docents). Within Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Hearst San Simeon State Park and the Pierdas Blancas State Marine Reserve and the Marine Conservation Area MPA and is governed by special protections established by the DFW Marine Region. Sandy beaches used as northern elephant seal breeding habitat. This is also a snowy plover nesting beach. Seabirds and shorebirds present. Designated critical habitat for leatherback sea turtles. Black abalone may be present in rocky intertidal habitat (designated critical habitat). Northern elephant seals present year-round.

Resources at Risk:

ESI and Habitat: 2A Exposed wave-cut platforms in bedrock, mud, or clay
4 Coarse-grained sand beaches

List of Resources at Risk:

	Resource Name	Status	Presence	Sensitivity
Birds	Western snowy plover	FT, SSC	Year-round	
Invertebrates	black abalone	FE	Year-round	
Mammals	Southern sea otter	FT, SP	Year-round	
Mammals	Northern elephant seal	FP	Year-round	
Reptiles	leatherback sea turtle	FE	Year-round	

FT-Federally Threatened, FE-Federally Endangered, FP-Federally Protected, SE-State Endangered, ST-State Threatened, SP -State Protected, SR-State Rare, SSC-Species of Special Concern, BGEPA-Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, SSSP-State Special Status Species

List of Key Contacts:

Type	Name/Title	Organization	Phone
C	/	Central Coast Information Center	(805) 682-4711
C	/Coordinator	Native American Heritage Commission	(916) 373-3710
E	John Hodge/Associate Field Manager	Bureau of Land Management, Coastal Natl. Monu	(661) 301-1659
T	Leisyka Parrott/CCNM Manager	Bureau of Land Management	(707) 513-3891
T	Steve Wertz/Senior Env. Scientist Supervisor	California Department of Fish and Wildlife, MPAs	(562) 343-3808
T	SURCOM (24-hr)/	California State Parks (Dispatch)	(951) 443-2969
T	/Emergency Responder, 24-hr	Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary	(831) 236-6797
T	Justin Viezbicke/Marine Mammal Stranding	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service	(562) 506-4315
T	Melissa Neuman/Marine Biologist	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service	(562) 481-4594
T	Tina Fahy/Sea Turtle Recovery Coordinator	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service	(562) 980-4023
T	/Spill Response Coordinator	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal T&E Species	(805) 644-1766

C – Cultural, Historic, Archaeological; E – Entry/Owner/Access; O – Other; S – Safety; T – Trustee; X – Exclusion or Security

Additional Site Summary Comments:

Marine mammal pupping seasons: Northern elephant seals December - March; southern sea otters year-round. Leatherback sea turtles are most commonly observed August - November. Western snowy plovers nest March - September. Refer to Typical Sandy Beach Site Summary and Strategy pages (Site 4-000-A) for information on response operations when dealing with snowy plovers and least terns.

Concerns and Advice to Responders:

Refer to Typical Sandy Beach Site Summary and Strategy pages (Site 4-000-A) for information on response operations when dealing with snowy plovers and least terns. Sensitive Biota - sensitive rafting areas for birds, elephant seals, sea otters, and other marine mammals. Black abalone (endangered) may be present in rocky intertidal habitat (designated critical habitat). Southern sea otters (threatened) pup year-round.

Hazard and Restrictions:

Site is within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the Sea Otter Game Refuge, the Piedras Blancas State Marine Reserve and the Marine Conservation Area MPA [fisheries protection areas offshore from Pt. Sierra Nevada south 5 miles and offshore 3 nautical miles], and Hearst San Simeon State Park.

Site Strategies:**Site Validation Level: II**

Strategy: 4-040.1 *Objective:* No Onsite Options: Consider Offshore Containment/Recovery/ART
Strategy: Offshore containment and recovery (OCR) are 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.
Table of Response Resources

Last Page Update**Logistics:**

Directions: From the north: Take Hwy 101 S to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1 N, (or Hwy 5 S to Hwy 41 W to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1 N). Follow Hwy 1 N past San Simeon. From the south: Take the Morro Bay exit in San Luis Obispo. Continue on Hwy 1 as above. Pocket beaches start just south of Pt. Piedras Blancas, USCG Lighthouse and continue south to Elephant Seal Viewing Vista Turnout.

Land Access: Foot access only with BLM permission from Lighthouse.

On-Water Limitations: Limitations: Depth, obstruction. Launching, Loading, Docking and Services Available: Morro Bay boat ramp facility is approx. 40 miles south.

Facilities, Staging Areas, Command Posts, Available Equipment: Command Post & Staging area: U.S. Geologic Survey research facility is located at the Piedras Blancas lighthouse. Staging, parking, water, and phones are available. State Park Office at Hearst Castle. Airports: SLO County Airport is located 1 hour south. Paso Robles Airport is located 1 hour inland. Private strip located 15 min south at Hearst Castle Visitors Center.

Communications Problems: None.

Additional Operational Comments:



CDFW - OSPR & USCG Site: 4-040 Name: Elephant Seal Beaches south of Pt. Piedras Blancas

A. Caputo (OSPR) & J. Gold (OSPR) Date: 10/6/2023

**No shoreline strategies;
consider offshore strategies**