

**4-040 -A Site Summary- Elephant Seal Beaches N & S of Pt. Piedras Blancas****4-040 -A**

County: **San Luis Obispo**  
 USGS Quad: **Piedras Blancas**

Thomas Guide Location  
 324 F-5

Latitude N  
 35.6670

Longitude W  
 121.2775

NOAA Chart: **Pt. Sur to Pt. Conception 18700**

Last Page Update : 5/1/2014
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**SITE DESCRIPTION:**

See Division B map. 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 Piedras 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 elephant seal breeding habitat. This is also a snowy plover nesting beach.

**SEASONAL and SPECIAL RESOURCE CONCERN**

Elephant seals present year round. Lowest concentrations occur in July and August. Cows and juveniles molt March-June, bulls molt June-Aug, juveniles haulout Aug-Dec. Pupping occurs December and breeding occurs late December-March.

Designated critical habitat for leatherback sea turtles (endangered) most commonly observed Aug - Nov.; Snowy plover nesting March-September.

Sea otter pupping season is Jan-March.

Throughout Division B, black abalone (endangered) may be present in rocky intertidal habitat (proposed critical habitat).

**RESOURCES OF PRIMARY CONCERN**

Western snowy plovers.

Northern elephant seals, sea otters, and seabirds.

**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
T	Melissa Boggs Environmental Scientist	CDFW-OSPR	(805) 558-1005
E/T	Jim Buchae	Bureau of Land Management	(805) 927-2968
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
E/T	Scott Kathey Regulatory Coordinator	Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary	(831) 647-4251
T	David Ledig Manager	BLM, Coastal Natl. Monument	(831) 630-5006
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
T	Elizabeth Petras Biologist	National Marine Fisheries Service	(562) 980-3238
C	SHPO	State Office of Historic Preservation	(916) 445-7000
E/T	Carolyn Skinder Biologist	Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary	(805) 927-2145
E/T	Dispatch State Parks	State Dept. Parks and Recreation	(951) 443-2969
T	Steve Wertz	CDFW for MPAs	(562) 342-7184

**ADDITIONAL SITE SUMMARY COMMENTS:**

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324 F-5 San Luis Obispo

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## CONCERNS and ADVICE to RESPONDERS:

Sensitive Biota - sensitive rafting areas for birds, elephant seals, sea otters, and other marine mammals, black abalone may be present on rocky intertidal habitat.

**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. 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.

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:

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

Strategy 4-040.1 Objective: Exclude/deflect oil from this beach/rocky habitat.

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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4-040.1

Offshore containment & recovery

## LOGISTICS

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

From the 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.

## WATER LOGISTICS:

Limitations: depth, obstruction

Launching, Loading, Docking and Services Available: Morro Bay boat ramp facility is approx. 40 miles south.

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

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:**

**ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL COMMENTS:**

