

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

Thomas Guide Location
 591 C-4
 NOAA Chart: **Estero Bay 18703**

Latitude N
 35.4278
 Longitude W
 120.8819

Last Page Update : 5/1/2014

SITE DESCRIPTION:

See Division E map. Morro Strand State Beach is a fine to medium grained sandy beach (from Toro Creek north to Cayucos, approximately 1.5 miles long). Beach day use area and is highly utilized. There is a rocky platform to the north and offshore rocks. Willow Creek mouth and associated marsh is located within the State Beach. There are houses on cliffs behind beach.

SEASONAL and SPECIAL RESOURCE CONCERN

Western snowy plovers (threatened) are present year round, but nest in the foredunes March-Sept. April-May is spawning season for California grunion which may be found on this beach in low concentrations. Tidewater gobies (threatened, peak nesting in estuary sediments, April-July) and Western pond turtles (species of special concern) may be found.

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.

Shore birds and sea birds including brown pelicans, willets, grebes, loons are present year round.

Southern sea otters can be observed offshore year round.

Other birds include brown pelicans, marbled godwits, willets, crewels, whimbrels, sandpipers, and gulls.

Southern sea otters, Ca. sea lions, and harbor seals and endangered leatherback sea turtles (critical habitat, most commonly observed Aug. - Nov.) can be observed offshore.

CULTURAL, HISTORIC, and ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITIES

Archaeological sites are also of 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
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
E/T	Dispatch State Parks	State Dept. Parks and Recreation	(951) 443-2969

ADDITIONAL SITE SUMMARY COMMENTS:

CONCERNS and ADVICE to RESPONDERS:

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.

To protect tidewater gobies in creek, 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/riparian habitat – Mud flats, marshlands, and creeks 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, marshy areas, and riparian habitat/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.

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:

Morro Strand State Beach.

SITE STRATEGIES

Strategy 4-130.1 Objective: Deflect or exclude oil from reaching this beach.

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 4-130.2 Objective: Exclude oil from getting into creek.

Consider closing off Willow Creek mouth is open by means of booming (short-skirted boom or swamp boom), or sediment or sandbag dike if berm top is breached. Avoid taking sand from dunes to create protective berm; take sand from active beach face. March 1- Sept 15, Western Snowy Plover nesting season, consult Fish and Game and USFWS prior to dike construction for guidance on how to lessen impacts on birds and nests.

strategy number	harbor boom	swamp boom	Other boom type	sorb boom	Anchoring no	Boat and gear	Boom boat	Skiffs punts	Skimmers No	Type	Special Equipment or and kinds	comment	staff deploy	Staff tend
4-130.1												Offshore containment & recovery		
4-130.2		100			2			1	SSS				2	

LOGISTICS

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

From the south: Take Hwy 101N to Hwy 1 N, Morro Bay exit in San Luis Obispo, to 24th St. exit (across from cemetery) in Cayucos, veer to the left to parking area, to Morro Strand State Beach. Approx. 5 miles north of Morro Bay.

From the north take Hwy 101 S to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1 S (or take Hwy 5 S o Hwy 41 W to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1), to 24th St exit in Cayucos.

LAND ACCESS: Vehicle access but dune plants and Snowy Plover's are of concern

WATER LOGISTICS:

Limitations: depth, obstruction

Launching, Loading, Docking Morro Bay boat launch (approx. 5 miles south)

and Services Available:

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

Staging Area: State parking lot. Chevron Estero Bay Marine Terminal is approx. 2 miles south.

Command Post: U.S. Coast Guard offices in Morro Bay, approx. 5 miles south. CDFW office in San Luis Obispo.

Airports: SLO County Airport is approx. 30 miles south. Paso Robles Airport is approx. 30 miles inland.

COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS:

ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL COMMENTS:

