

4-140 -A Site Summary- Morro Strand Beach (South)/Morro Creek**4-140 -A**

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

Thomas Guide Location
 611 D-3
 NOAA Chart: **Estero Bay 18703**

Latitude N
 35.3922
 Longitude W
 120.8651

Last Page Update : 5/1/2014

SITE DESCRIPTION:

See Division E map. Morro Strand Beach is a fine to medium grained sandy beach, designated critical habitat for western snowy plovers (threatened). From Toro Creek south to Morro Rock is approximately 2.8 miles long. At the southern end of this site is Morro Creek, designated critical habitat for steelhead trout (endangered). There is a small rocky platform at north end of beach. This beach is highly utilized for recreational purposes (surfing, fishing, etc.). There is a State Beach Campground off Yerba Buena Street. Private residences behind beach. The southern portion of this beach, from Morro Rock north to Morro Creek, Morro Rock City Beach, is owned and managed by the City of Morro Bay. North of Morro Creek beach is owned and managed by State Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

SEASONAL and SPECIAL RESOURCE CONCERN

Plovers are present year round and nesting season is mid- March - Sept, nest in foredunes. Shorebirds and Pismo clams are present year round. April-May is spawning season for California Grunion. Steelhead (threatened) may be found in Morro Creek (critical habitat).

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.

Other birds include the brown pelicans, willets, sandpipers, gulls, marbled godwits.

Southern sea otters can be observed off shore. Designated critical habitat for leatherback sea turtles (endangered), most commonly observed Aug. – Nov.

California grunion may spawn in this area in low concentrations. Pismo clams are present year round.

CULTURAL, HISTORIC, and ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITIES

Coastal archaeological sites are 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
O	Eric Endersby Harbor Manager	Morro Bay Harbor Dept	(805) 772-6254
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
E/T	Dispatch State Parks	State Dept. Parks and Recreation	(951) 443-2969

ADDITIONAL SITE SUMMARY COMMENTS:

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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.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS:

Sensitive Biota - Nearshore waters include sensitive rafting areas for birds, sea otters, and other marine mammals. Dune Habitats – Minimize mechanical and human activities in vegetated dune habitat.

Steelhead (endangered) may be found in Morro Creek (critical habitat). 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.

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:

State Park property. Residential neighborhood and high recreational use of beach.

SITE STRATEGIES

Strategy 4-140.1 Objective: Deflect or exclude oil from impacting 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 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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4-140.1

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 Hwy 1 N, Morro Bay exit in San Luis Obispo, to Yerba Buena St. (mile marker 31.98) to Morro Stand State Beach Campground.

From the north take Hwy 101 S to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1 S (or Hwy 5 S to Hwy 41 W to Hwy 46 W to Hwy 1), to Yerba Buena St. follow directions as above.

LAND ACCESS: Vehicle access available, but dune plants and Plover nesting concerns

WATER LOGISTICS:

Limitations: depth, obstruction

Launching, Loading, Docking Morro Bay boat launch (approx. 2 miles south) and Services Available:

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

Staging Area: State Beach Campground parking lot.

Command Post: U.S. Coast Guard office in Morro Bay approx. 2 miles south. CDFW office in San Luis Obispo.

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

COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS:

