

Recommendations for 2008 Pre-nesting closures

The pre-nesting closures have been identified and are based on recent PIPL breeding areas. As stated in the FONSI, the closures provide for continued recreational use and access consistent with required management of protected species. These closures will meet the requirements to provide protection from adverse impacts related to recreational uses as required by laws and policies, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the ESA, and *NPS Management Policies 2006*. Natural resource staff conducted an annual assessment of PIPL breeding habitat on February 25-26, 2008 and March 5, 2008. The Park's dynamic shorelines and the behavior of the PIPLs may result in modifications which may result in less access to certain areas. Following are recommendations for the 2008 pre-nesting closures:

Bodie Island

Recent PIPL Breeding History: The PIPL nest in 2007 was located in the southern end of the small dunes. Although nests have been documented in this area historically, 2007 was the first time in over 20 years that a chick fledged from this area. No known PIPL nesting occurred in 2005 and 2006.

Observations: A site visit was conducted on February 26, 2008. When compared to last year, a lot of beach to the east of the small dunes has disappeared. At high tide there would not be enough room for a 100 foot wide ORV corridor between the signs and the high tide line. During the habitat assessment there was barely enough room for one vehicle to pass through the area at high tide. It is difficult to predict what this area will look like when the pre-nesting closures are installed.



(Red line denotes approximation of high tide line on 3/5/08)

Recommendation: Install a closure similar to last year except in the area east and southeast of the small dunes where the current winter closures will remain in place. In this area it will not be possible to leave a 100 foot wide ORV corridor between the dunes and the high tide line because of changes in the shoreline. It will be left to the discretion

of the driver as to whether they want to drive through salt water to gain access to the inlet and the bridge. If ORVs are documented driving into the closure to avoid the high tides, access to the inlet beyond the “pinch point” will not be allowed and a safety closure will be installed. The bait pond will only be accessible by driving around the spit and then driving north, parallel with the Bonner Bridge. There will be no access to the bait pond from the east (or ocean-side). ORV access to the bait pond will be maintained in this area as long as resource closure violations (i.e. driving in the vegetation parallel to the Bonner Bridge at high tides) are not documented.

Cape Point/South Beach

Recent PIPL Breeding History: In 2007 this area was the Park’s most productive PIPL breeding area. In 2007 the Park documented four pairs and nine nests at Cape Point and none at South Beach. In 2006 three pairs (two at Cape Point and one on South Beach) attempted nesting in this area. Only one of the nests at Cape Point successfully fledged young, the only nest in the entire Park that successfully fledged young in 2006. In 2005 a nest on South Beach successfully fledged 3 chicks and there were no documented nests at Cape Point.

Observations: During the site visit on February 26, 2008 there was a large creek coming out of the winter closure and emptying out into the Atlantic just west of “The Hook”.



A sandbar is forming where this creek empties into the Atlantic and if it doesn’t dry up has the potential to be excellent PIPL foraging habitat.



Recommendation: Install a pre-nesting closure that allows ORV and pedestrian access from Ramp 44 to the Point and from the Point approximately 450 meters west/northwest of the Point. The western end of the full beach closure would end near the halfway point between Salt Pond Ramp and Ramp 45. The shoreline closure will encompass the drainage near where we had a foraging closure in 2007. Approximately 1 mile of shoreline would be closed to pedestrians and ORVs. Salt Pond Ramp would be closed to pedestrian and ORV access because of the location of a PIPL nest in this area in 2007. Approximately 1.5 miles of the upper beach west of Ramp 45 (i.e. South Beach) will be included in the pre-nesting closure to encompass PIPL scrapes documented in 2007.

Overwash Fans

Recent PIPL Breeding History: No nests have ever been documented in this area. In 2007 PIPL were observed foraging on the sound-side and ocean-side. After plovers were observed foraging on the ocean-side in late April, we installed a foraging closure on April 28th. No PIPLs were observed using the closure after its establishment and it was removed on May 8th after a storm came through and removed most of the signs. We believe these were PIPL that were migrating through the area. In 2006 and 2005 PIPL were documented scraping and foraging within the proposed pre-nesting closure area. We do not have GPS locations for the scrapes but believe the proposed pre-nesting closure encompasses them.

Recommendation: Install a pre-nesting closure similar to the closure in 2007, which requires the closing of Pole Road and re-routing of traffic to the spurs off of the Pole Road onto the ocean-side shoreline.

Hatteras Inlet Spit

Recent PIPL Breeding History: In 2007 a single PIPL was observed making a “roosting” scrape but no breeding behavior was observed since it was a lone individual. In 2006 scrapes were documented but no nest was ever found. In 2005 one nest successfully fledged three young.

Observations: The spit is beginning to accrete from where the vegetation stops and is forming a small point with tidal pools. In comparing the 2005 aerials to shorelines documented in March of 2008, we have lost 68 acres of sand and vegetation from this area. Much erosion has also occurred on the ocean-side and the high tide line is currently within the winter closure boundaries. The 2005 nest location is now in the surf zone. Potential breeding habitat remains in the flats to the east of the old nest site.



Recommendation: The full beach closure would begin at approximately 0.1 mile from Pole Road Ramp. This will be accomplished by bringing the southeast corner of the winter closure down to the shoreline. Approximately 0.5 miles of shoreline will be closed to ORVs and pedestrians. Pedestrians will be allowed access to “The Rip” via the Spur Road but not to the ocean-side shoreline beyond the spit (i.e. where the vegetation starts on the oceanside). No ORVs or pets will be allowed in the “pedestrian only” area of the spit. If plovers are observed foraging on the spit, pedestrian access will be prohibited from the area.

North Ocracoke

Recent PIPL Breeding History: Although plovers historically used this area, no recent breeding activity has been observed. A pair was observed in 2007 but no breeding activity or scrapes were documented. A possible scrape was identified by a novice birder south of Ramp 59. When we sent out an experienced birder to confirm the possible scrape it could not be confirmed.

Observations: Very little changes in habitat were observed from this time last year. Some possible accretion occurred on the spit towards the inlet and sound side but we have not yet mapped out the current shoreline for a comparison to 2007.

Recommendation: Install a pre-nesting closure similar to the first closure on north Ocracoke in 2007. The closure will begin 0.3 miles north of Ramp 59. Where the spit opens up, the closure will extend from the duneline to the shoreline in a north-easterly direction. If foraging plover are observed outside of the established pre-nesting closure, foraging closures will be established in those areas.

South Ocracoke

Recent PIPL Breeding History: A single pair nested on the edge of the dunes (east side) just north of the large flats in 2007 and 2006. Although the nests successfully hatched, the young were lost soon after hatching. A breeding pair with scrapes was documented in 2005 but no nest was ever located. No copulation, high step tattoo or parallel runs were observed.

Observations: Little to no changes in the habitat was observed from this time last year.

Recommendation: Install closure of the same specifications as in 2007 except for the installation of a full beach closure ~100 feet east from where Ocracoke Inlet meets the sound. A foraging closure on the ocean-side will probably need to be installed shortly after the PIPLs arrive. For the past two years the pair has consistently foraged on the ocean-side shoreline in the area across from their nesting location.