



# The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan

## *Building Partnerships for Shorebird Conservation*

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Washington State Parks  
Attn: Emily Lucas  
7150 Cleanwater Drive  
PO Box 42650  
Olympia, WA 98504-42650

Dear Ms, Lucas,

On behalf of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, we would like to offer comments on the proposed Bottle Beach State Park Interpretive Trail Development. The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council represents a collective of individuals and organizations interested in the long-term conservation of the hemisphere's shorebirds.

As you know, Grays Harbor is of hemispheric importance to migrant shorebirds as they travel along the Pacific coast, and human activities at coastal stopovers have a great potential to disrupt migration patterns. Research conducted at Grays Harbor, including at Bottle Beach, has shown that, especially in the spring, shorebirds are very sensitive to disturbance because they only have a few days to stop and refuel at this site on their way to breeding grounds in Alaska. Your recommendations in the proposal regarding construction timing and management plan development reflect your awareness of the importance of this shorebird stopover. However, we are concerned about the potential for increased levels of disturbance to shorebirds, which may result from development of a gravel trail parallel to the edge of the beach and the increased access points.

The gravel trail will likely attract visitors further into the site than the existing primitive trail, and, aside from the placement of interpretive panels on birding etiquette, limited information is provided on how Washington State Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) plans to discourage off-trail use. Although the proposal mentions the use of native plant barriers, it is unclear if barriers will be placed in a way to discourage access to the beach; we believe vegetation barriers will likely not deter visitor access. The three proposed access points, over

only one original access point, will also likely increase visitation and, hence, the likelihood of disturbance.

To minimize the effects of disturbance, we suggest you consider placing physical and visual barriers along the gravel trail similar to those used at Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge, the details which we believe have been suggested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. State Parks might also consider developing a brochure that presents information on the importance of the area to shorebirds and reasons why the site has been designated as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site; we would gladly assist in the development. Having seasonal volunteer docents would help raise awareness of the park's importance to shorebirds, assist visitors in enjoying the park's birdlife, and deter to beach disturbance. Volunteers could measure the effects that barriers and other methods have on minimizing disturbance.

We are also concerned with the potential for increased amounts of illegal access by ATVs and other motorized vehicles. The 3000-foot expansion of the interpretive trail designed for access to Americans with Disabilities could provide unwanted ATV access; there is no mention of how State Parks will discourage illegal access by motorized vehicles via this expanded trail. Unwanted vehicle access may lead to direct disturbance to shorebirds or the destruction of roost sites. We suggest you include barriers at the trailhead and east end of the foot bridge that would allow wheelchair access but exclude ATVs.

Because free-roaming dogs are a great source of disturbance to roosting, and feeding, shorebirds, we suggest that the trail not allow dogs or that the State Park leash regulation be strictly enforced. Informational materials should emphasize the need to keep dogs restrained.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the plan and offer comments. Please contact Sue Thomas, Chair of the Northern Pacific Coast Shorebird Working Group, if you have questions of comments. She can be reached at 503-231-6164 or [sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov).

Sincerely,

*Catherine Hickey* /s/

Chair, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council