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## Officials Release Conservation Plan for Piping Plovers

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife recently released a 26-year statewide Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that will promote long-term conservation for the piping plover while increasing the flexibility of recreational management on beaches with nesting plovers.

“We are pleased to have been able to work successfully with our coastal communities and the federal government to create the first state conservation plan for plovers in the United States, which will ensure this endangered shorebird, thrives in Massachusetts for generations to come,” said Matthew Beaton, Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

“I applaud the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and our state delegation for working together to develop this habitat conservation plan,” said Congresswoman Katherine Clark. “This commonsense plan protects piping plover populations while ensuring that our beaches remain treasured community resources, vibrant destinations for visitors, and key components of our economic future.”

“Since taking office two years ago and as the House Chair of the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, I have been working on this issue with state and federal officials, and I believe we have seen a steady improvement on Revere Beach with regard to plover management,” said Representative RoseLee Vincent. “Two years ago, the DCR wasn’t even allowed to rake the sand in the areas close to the symbolic fencing; today that is no longer the case.”

Developed under federal and state endangered species laws, the HCP acts as an umbrella under which individual beach managers can develop site-specific management plans choosing from a menu of options for recreational and operational management. Applicable to private, municipal and state lands only, the plan covers access

activities including use of roads, parking lots and over-sand vehicles in the vicinity of flightless chicks, as well as other recreational and beach management near plover nests.

“I want to thank our federal delegation, and particularly Congresswoman Clark, for their efforts in advocating for this long-term conservation plan. I also want to express my gratitude Speaker DeLeo and my legislative colleagues because in this year’s state budget, we were able to allocate \$100,000 to ensure this plan is implanted to increase recreational opportunities and shorebird conservation on the Commonwealth’s beaches,” said Vincent. “I want to further extend my appreciation to Commissioner George Peterson and Jon Regosin of the Mass Department of Fish & Game.”

The HCP prescribes steps to minimize effects to plovers from HCP activities, such as monitoring, escorting over-sand vehicles and limiting the amount of beach or number of pairs that can be affected each year. An annual sliding scale would enable MassWildlife to allow more activities as the statewide plover population increases, or less if it decreases. In addition to addressing access activities, the HCP takes a holistic approach to enhancing plover conservation by incorporating selective predator management, education, law enforcement and habitat improvement. By meeting statewide mitigation commitments, including strategic predator management, the HCP is expected to reduce egg and chick mortality and boost the number of young that survive.

“With the adoption of this HCP, I think now we are beginning to really see the fruits of our labor come to fruition. I am excited to see this new plan implemented, as I believe it strikes a balance between protecting the plover population while allowing greater utilization of our public beaches, especially on America’s First Public Beach,” Vincent concluded.

For more information and to review the final plan and supporting documents, visit <https://www.fws.gov/newengland/>.