

6.2 Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*) – Category SL

Management Units with Known Occurrences

The Pacific coast population of the western snowy plover is a federally threatened and State-Species of Special Concern that breeds primarily from southern Washington to southern Baja California, Mexico, and in interior areas of Oregon, California, Nevada, and several other western states (USFWS 2007). Genetically isolated from western snowy plovers found in the interior of North America (USFWS 1993), the Pacific coast population requires breeding grounds above the high-tide line on coastal beaches, beaches at creek and river mouths, and salt pans at lagoons and estuaries. These plovers may also take advantage of bluff-backed beaches, dredged material disposal sites, salt pond levees, dry salt ponds, and river bars (USFWS 2007).

Monitoring of this species is intensive and has been ongoing since 1977 by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. In San Diego county, monitoring of populations on military installations started in 1999, while USGS intensely monitored these plovers in San Diego County from 1994 through 1998 (Powell et al. 2002; USFWS 2007). Unitt (2004) reports that populations are found largely in MCB Camp Pendleton at the Santa Margarita River mouth, Batiquitos Lagoon, and Silver Strand State Beach, with occurrences mostly observed in MUs 1, 6, and 7. The results of the 1994 through 1998 USGS surveys indicated the continual high risk of decline and possible local extinction of the Pacific coast population (Powell et al. 2002). View a map of detections at: <http://arcg.is/2i97ZJT>.

Management Categorization Rationale

The western snowy plover should be managed as a Species Management Focus Category SL because persistence of one or more significant occurrences in the MSPA is at high risk of loss without immediate management action above and beyond that of daily maintenance activities and because management of marine habitats alone will not ensure its persistence.

Pacific coast populations of the western snowy plover continue to face multiple threats in southern California. A primary threat to this species, at both the regional and preserve levels, is the destruction and degradation of habitat (USFWS 2007). This threat can be attributed to urban development, disturbances from human

activities (e.g., shoreline stabilization, dredging, and increasing levels of human recreation), and introduced species. Additional threats include altered hydrological conditions and nest predation. USFWS (1993) concluded that a combination of habitat loss and anthropogenic disturbances has led to a decline in active nesting colonies and overall decline on this population of the western snowy plover.

Management and Monitoring Approach

The overarching goal for western snowy plover is to protect, enhance, and restore occupied and historically occupied habitat to create resilient, self-sustaining populations that provide for persistence over the long term (>100 years).

For the 2017–2021 planning cycle, the management and monitoring approach for the western snowy plover is to:

- (1) continue monitoring conserved occurrences annually through 2021 to document abundance, record threats, and identify necessary management actions;
- (2) implement routine management as determined during monitoring;
- (3) refine BMPs based on the results of ongoing management experiments;
- (4) use occurrence status, threat data, and BMPs to develop a joint management recommendation for the western snowy plover for regional support;
- (5) continue support for ongoing CDFW surveys;
- (6) implement the highest-priority management actions for western snowy plover, and
- (7) monitor the success of the recommended management actions.

For details and the most up-to-date goals, objectives, and actions, go to the MSP Portal Western Snowy Plover summary page: http://portal.sdmmp.com/view_species.php?taxaid=824565.

Western Snowy Plover References

Powell, A. N., C. L. Fritz, B. L. Peterson, J. M. Terp. 2002. Status of Breeding and Wintering Snowy Plovers in San Diego County, California, 1994–1999. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 73(2):156–165.

Unitt, P. 2004. *San Diego County Bird Atlas*. Proceedings of the San Diego Society of Natural History #39.

USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). 1993. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Determination of Threatened Status for the Pacific Coast Population of the Western Snowy Plover; Final Rule. *Federal Register* 58(42):12864–12874.

USFWS. 2007. *Recovery Plan for the Pacific Coast Population of the Western Snowy Plover (Charadrius alexandrius nivosus)*. Sacramento, California.