



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site Wright Brothers National Memorial

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

N16 (CAHA)

June 15, 2007

Memorandum

To: Deputy Superintendent, Chief Ranger, Hatteras Island District Ranger, Ocracoke Island District Ranger, Wildlife Biologist, Chief of Resource Management, and Chief of Maintenance

From: Superintendent

Subject: Instructions for urgent contingency closure of areas if piping plover (PIPL) chicks leave a resource protection area, or if they move toward the perimeter of the area and have a less than adequate buffer

We utilize buffer zones to separate piping plover chicks from exposure to off-road vehicles (ORV's). The Interim Strategy provides for a minimum initial 600 ft buffer on either side of PIPL chicks (brood) based on observation of bird behavior and terrain conditions at the site. Based on observed behavior (e.g., if the brood is highly mobile) the buffer area may require expansion up to 3,000 ft if initially established smaller. Based on the mobility of the brood and the NPS capability to continually observe mobility and behavior, the buffer zone can be reduced after the first week to no less than 300 ft, but may require expansion up to 3000 ft if the brood remains highly mobile. The buffer moves with the chicks.

The location and status of PIPL chicks are determined and monitored by Resource Management (RM) staff on a daily basis. If/when we need to close an access corridor, please be prepared to take the following steps in the event that piping plover (PIPL) chicks migrate quickly and unexpectedly into an area currently open for off-road vehicle (ORV) use, or if they move toward the perimeter of a resource protection area and have a less than adequate buffer:

1. If RM staff observes PIPL chicks moving quickly toward an open ORV corridor, immediately notify RM lead bio tech(s) or wildlife biologist. Local LE personnel will then be notified and assistance will be requested. Early communication and response is important!
2. Need at least 4 people to implement the following steps:
  - Minimum 2 RM staff-1 will continue to monitor the location of the chicks and the other will evaluate access alternatives.
  - 1 LE staff will be posted to prevent additional vehicles from entering the area and to inform the public as to the reason for the closure.

1 Maintenance staff will bring barricades (and/or other necessary signage) to the LE (or RM) staff on location. If necessary, they will remain on site to help with traffic control on the opposite side of the closure if RM staff is not available. They will be responsible for keeping vehicles from leaving the area. A minimum 600' buffer will need to be established on both sides of the chicks. Notify any moving vehicles within the vicinity of the chicks to STOP and WAIT. The idea is to "freeze" traffic where it is and prevent new traffic from entering the area until the situation can be controlled. This means that some vehicles will be temporarily unable to leave.

Use barricades to stop all traffic from traveling through the area. Once traffic is controlled and location of chicks is confirmed, notify Chief of Resource Management, Chief Ranger, and Deputy Superintendent or Superintendent.

3. RM lead bio tech or wildlife biologist will determine the safest route to escort vehicles out of the area. To the extent possible, route traffic away from the area where the chicks are located, rather than through it.

4. Consider this an emergency situation and impose a controlled, full closure of the immediate area. It is more important to STOP traffic and identify a safe evacuation route, than it is to evacuate traffic quickly. In this type of situation, moving vehicles pose the greatest risk to the chicks. This duty can be performed by any available staff (LE, RM, or Maintenance). Politely direct all visitors and vehicles to leave via the designated route. Do NOT allow people/vehicles to remain behind. Apologize for the inconvenience and let them know we will evaluate when and if we can reopen.

5. Close any nearby bypass route(s) if buffer zone is less than 600 ft.

6. Once the situation is secured, the site will be closed the remainder of the day and night, then we will re-evaluate the next morning whether we can restore access and by what route.

7. At first light RM staff will be on sight to locate the chicks. This may be difficult to determine if more than one brood is on the ground. ORV access will not be restored until the chicks have been located and are inside a protected location. If a chick(s) from the brood cannot be located the area will remain closed until it could be determined if the chick(s) was lost to predation. In some instances it may be possible to determine this from the behavior of the adult(s). If the adults cannot be located, the area may need to remain closed until RM staff makes the determination that the chicks have been lost.

8. LE staff will be at the barricade at first light to prevent ORVs from entering the area and to open access once the chicks have been located or determined to be lost.

*Michael B. Munay*